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ABSTRACT

The design of a training program for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) at the University of Washington and its current implementation are described. Departmental training for GTAs is administered through the Center for Instructional Development and Research (CIDR). Training support provided by CIDR is based on a Train-the-Trainer model, which assumes that leaders/supervisors should play an active role in training their subordinates. A summer GTA training planning meeting for faculty GTA training coordinators and graduate student representatives demonstrates the use of the instructional lab and other tools, and facilitates small group discussions about training concerns of department members. Workshops are also conducted on a variety of topics, such as GTA orientation and instructional technology. Typical workshops that are included in TA orientation are described, and a timetable for planning GTA orientation activities is provided. Instructional materials for GTA training programs that have been developed by CIDR are also described, along with CIDR videotape facilities and services, TA training follow-up, consultation services, and CIDR research. (SW)

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The materials in the Special Collection on the Training of Teaching Assistants were developed through the active efforts of numerous educators who first met at the 1986 National Conference on the Institutional Responsibilities and Responses in the Employment and Education of Teaching Assistants held at the Ohio State University. Assisted by more than 80 individuals, the committee chairs listed below were able to establish the collection which will be developed and maintained by the ERIC Clearinghouse for Higher Education. This arrangement will enable faculty members, faculty developers, administrators, TA supervisors, and graduate teaching assistants to have access to TA training materials produced by institutions across the nation.

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THE TRAINING OF GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

November, 1986

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The Training of Graduate Teaching Assistants at the University of Washington

As in many other institutions, the training of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) at the University of Washington began with meetings between GTAs and course supervisors within departments that offered courses with large enrollments. These meetings were usually informal get-togethers to talk about the course including what the course supervisor expected of the graduate teaching assistants, how student work was to be evaluated, and what would be on the final exam. A few departments offered GTA Orientation and weekly meetings as early as the 1950's. Over the years, large enrollment courses in many disciplines increased and multisectioned introductory courses grew requiring graduate teaching assistants to assume instructor roles. By 1980, teaching assistants were responsible for a portion of the instruction in 33% of the 100-200 level courses and for almost 25% of the instruction in all undergraduate courses at the University of Washington. As Provost Beckmann wrote in April of 1980, "Although graduate teaching assistants have consistently proven themselves to be hard-working, responsible instructors, it appears that many teaching assistants are expected to grade papers, conduct quiz sections, and teach undergraduate courses without adequate training or supervision."[1] The Provost appointed a GTA Training Task Force whose mandate was to "examine the way departments presently train and supervise teaching assistants and do whatever is necessary to ensure that all teaching assistants receive appropriate orientation, training, and supervision by Autumn, 1981."[2] The plan devised by that Task Force shaped the overall design of GTA Training at the University of Washington. This paper will attempt to describe the design of that training and its current implementation in the hope that the ideas will be of value to other institutions.

Overview of the Institution's Approach to GTA Training

As originally conceived, Graduate Teaching Assistant Training at the University of Washington remains the responsibility of each department that employs graduate students

to teach in undergraduate courses whether the GTA corrects and conferences over student work, leads a quiz section, conducts a laboratory, tutors, lectures in a large class, or assumes total responsibility for a class including the assignment of course grades. Graduate Teaching Assistants numbering about 1200 as of Fall Quarter, 1986, are responsible for a significant portion of the instructional programs in departments that teach undergraduate courses.

As a result of this significant dependence on GTAs for teaching undergraduate classes, the University actively attempts to enable each academic unit with graduate teaching assistant appointments to provide ongoing GTA training programs. In doing so, the University adheres to a discipline-specific approach, believing the way academics stimulate inquiry, generate knowledge and present understanding is specific to the respective disciplines. Operationally, this results in department-centered GTA training programs. Each department is asked to show evidence of a training program which will assist its graduate teaching assistants in acquiring the skills necessary to perform the assigned instructional tasks. Every two years, the Provost requests a written report from each department describing its efforts in this area. Since the University believes in this discipline-specific approach and, consequently, does not require all GTAs to complete a general cross-discipline training program as do some universities, the administration provides resources for departmental GTA training programs through the Center for Instructional Development and Research (CIDR).

The Center for Instructional Development and Research

The primary purpose of CIDR is to encourage and support improvement of teaching and learning at the University of Washington. Representing a part of the University's commitment to excellence in teaching, CIDR operates as an active instructional resource clearinghouse to provide comprehensive assistance to all instructors of the institution.[4] Thus, a significant part of CIDR's mission lies in providing assistance to GTAs through their departmental programs.

Train-the-Trainer Model

The GTA training support that CIDR staff provides for departments is based on a Train-the-Trainer model originally described in the organizational development literature. An important assumption of this model is that leaders/supervisors should play an active role in training their subordinates---that training is most effectively conducted by those who best understand the particular task to be accomplished and that training the "trainer" who returns to a department division or unit in an organization to instruct others is cost effective.

Using this approach, CIDR staff are involved in providing ideas, materials, and instructional facilities for a Faculty GTA Training Coordinator and a Student GTA Training Representative appointed by the chairs of each department employing teaching assistants. These two departmentally appointed "trainers" form the network for an exchange of ideas between CIDR staff and trainers and among trainers from the various departments employing GTAs.

Thus, GTA Training at the University of Washington can be represented by Figure 1:

Insert Figure 1 about here

Using this model, CIDR staff provide a large number of services designed to meet the specific needs of GTA Trainers in each department. The yearly cycle typically begins when CIDR offers a Spring GTA Training Planning Meeting in May of each year.

Spring GTA Training Planning Meeting

The purpose of the Spring GTA Training Planning Meeting for Faculty GTA Training Coordinators and Graduate Student Representatives is to demonstrate the use of the instructional lab and other tools, and to facilitate small group discussions over training concerns of department members. The opening session of the Spring Meeting typically includes remarks from the Dean of the Graduate School, and previews of newly developed materials. This session is followed by workshops including such topics as: 1) developing a quarter-length GTA seminar (proseminar); 2) organizing a three-day or week-long

orientation; 3) using technology for improvement of instruction; and 4) evaluating TA instruction. CIDR staff consultants are also available to consult with departmental representatives who have more specific interests or needs.

Faculty Coordinators and GTA Representatives leave the Spring Meeting with packets of training materials, including request forms for CIDR resources and GTA Instructional Interest Inventories for use in determining the needs and interests of GTAs in their own departments. Included also is a possible timeline for the development of a GTA Orientation Training Program as shown below.

Timeline for Planning GTA Orientation Activities

The following outline is designed to assist departments in developing a timetable for planning GTA orientation activities. For individuals wishing to discuss their plans for orientation in more detail, Center staff are available to assist in assessment of departmental needs and design of a program to meet those needs.

May

I. **Notify new graduate students of the: a) need for reliable summer addresses b) arrival of important mailings; c) requirements for GTA orientation.** *(Often this process can be conducted in conjunction with other departmental mailings notifying new graduate students of their acceptance into graduate study.)*

II. **Assess departmental GTA training needs and resources.** *(This process often includes using evaluations, mailings, and printed materials from previous orientations, talking to TAs and faculty about perceived needs, and reviewing programs developed by other departments).*

III. **Attend CIDR Spring GTA Training Planning Meeting.** *(This meeting provides planners the opportunity to review available resources outside their departments, to assess their program in terms of campus-wide training efforts, and to begin scheduling services for fall training.)*

IV. **Develop an overall plan for GTA Training.** *(Increasingly, individual departments are finding that their training needs are best met by ongoing programs of TA training that proceed throughout the academic year. If ongoing training is a departmental need, it is important to plan the program early in order to make the best use of resources. Many departments have found that a professional seminar on teaching is an important part of their ongoing training. For those interested in developing such programs, CIDR staff are available to assist with planning and development.)*

June

I. **Decide on tentative schedule of activities for fall orientation.** *(It is helpful to develop a tentative schedule before faculty and graduate students leave for the summer. The development of such a schedule commonly includes review of all resources--both within and outside the department--that can assist in meeting departmental TA orientation needs.)*

II. **Obtain permission from participants.** *(It is common to include both faculty and returning TAs in the orientation activities. It is best, however, if they are notified before they embark on other summer activities. When they agree to participate, it is important to inquire if they have any special room or equipment needs for their presentations. For greatest flexibility, it is also important to schedule CIDR staff as early as possible, especially if they will be providing training assistance during the summer.)*

III. **Check availability of rooms, equipment and resources.** *(Equipment and resources are heavily scheduled at orientation time. For the best service, planners should schedule all resources well in advance, particularly those resources that are used across campus during orientation week, i.e., CIDR and Instructional Media Services.)*

IV. **Obtain feedback about tentative schedule.** *(Because of the variety of schedules and needs of those involved in TA training, it is important to obtain feedback about the schedule of activities. Commonly, departmental TA Coordinators prepare tentative schedules and distribute them to faculty and continuing graduate teaching assistants for feedback).*

V. **Finalize the schedule.** *(Having the schedule finalized before participants leave for the summer ensures that all participants are aware of their responsibilities. Finalizing the schedule early also means confirmation of resources outside the department).*

July-August

I. **Notify new graduate students of their responsibilities during GTA training.** *(This mailing should include a schedule of orientation activities. Commonly, TAs are reminded that their pay begins on September 16 and they can, therefore, be required to attend departmental orientation activities anytime after that date. Some departments remind newcomers that they should arrive in plenty of time to find housing,*

establish bank accounts, etc., so they are free to focus on orientation during the scheduled times. Many departments also send out copies of reading materials such as textbooks and Mentor, the TA handbook.)

II. **Work with CIDR staff for any training assistance needed to facilitate workshops or videotapes for fall presentation.** *(CIDR staff encourage departments to use individuals in their own disciplines as resource persons for presentations during orientation. Since the activities frequently involve facilitation of videotapes produced at the Center or discussion of instructional issues, CIDR staff work with individuals to prepare for their responsibilities as resource persons in their own departments. It is best if CIDR staff can provide such assistance well in advance of the formal orientation.)*

III. **Confirm scheduled resources and facilities.** *(In late July or early August, CIDR staff will send a letter of confirmation to all departments that have scheduled CIDR services. It is a good idea to confirm all other resources and facilities as well.)*

IV. **Gather materials for packets.** *(Many departments prepare a packet of materials designed to orient new graduate students to the department and the university in general. Packets commonly include materials such as: departmental policies and guidelines; information on graduate teaching assignments; instructional resources; CIDR brochure; building, campus and university district maps; faculty profiles; Mentor; counseling center information; style and policy manual for theses and dissertations; GPSS manual; and descriptions of other graduate student organizations and services. To avoid overload, many departments send out some of the reading during the summer.)*

September

I. **Send reminder notes to participants.** *(Before the formal activities, presenters should be reminded of times, places, and logistics for their participation.)*

II. **Conduct orientation activities.** *(Most departments conduct orientation during the week prior to the beginning of classes. Although the length of orientation varies, the average length is three to five days.)*

III. **Obtain closure.** *(Such closure consists of activities such as returning equipment and sending thank you notes to presenters.)*

IV. **Follow-up.** *(Follow-up may consist of a variety of training activities including: a one quarter, discipline-specific seminar on instruction; ongoing discipline-specific workshops on instructional issues; periodic videotaping of instruction; midterm evaluations for each quarter; classroom observations conducted by faculty supervisors or CIDR staff consultants.)*

In Summary, these guidelines are provided:

Timetable for Planning Major GTA Orientation Activities

May	June	July/August	September
•Assess departmental GTA training needs	•Set tentative schedule	•Contact new graduate students	•Conduct fall orientation
•Attend CIDR Spring Meeting	•Contact participants	•Work with CIDR staff to develop GTA training	•Prepare for ongoing GTA training program
•Develop plan for GTA training	•Schedule equipment, facilities	•Prepare packets	

This timetable is approximate and is designed to be used as a guide. The planning activities may actually overlap from month to month depending on the needs of individual departments.

Through follow-up letters sent to all departmental representatives following the Spring Meeting, CIDR staff maintain contact with all Faculty Coordinators and GTA Representatives who attended. In many cases those contacts result in ongoing training and consultation during the summer to assist departments in designing and planning for Fall GTA Orientations.

Fall GTA Orientations

Following the design and planning stages for GTA Orientations, many Faculty Coordinators or GTA Representatives request CIDR staff to provide customized workshops for their GTAs during their Orientation programs. These are workshops which have been developed in collaboration with the TA Trainers and are adapted to the needs of the TAs in a specific discipline.

A brief description of typical workshops requested for TA Orientations includes:

Lecturing. *Depending on departmental needs, this workshop may focus on one or more of the following: goals for lecturing, methods for using the lecture format, suggestions for improving lecture presentations, and methods of evaluating the effectiveness of lectures. Through the use of examples drawn from the specific discipline, a CIDR staff member will also identify the major components of a lecture and steps in preparing a lecture.*

Leading class discussion. *In this workshop a CIDR staff member will: identify reasons for using classroom discussion, provide systematic questioning procedures, suggest effective discussion preparation steps for both instructors and students, and discuss methods for generating and maintaining student participation in classroom discussion settings. Examples are drawn from the specific discipline.*

Constructing and evaluating tests. *Depending on departmental needs, this workshop will address one or more of the following: types of testing available, advantages and disadvantages of various types of testing, and methods of effective test construction as they relate to course goals , the nature of the course content, and criteria for evaluating student performance. Tests from the discipline provide the basis for this discussion.*

Teaching effectively. *This workshop focuses on identifying dimensions of effective teaching and relating them to the instructional process. Then, depending on departmental needs, a CIDR staff member will facilitate discussion on ways of incorporating the dimensions in the improvement of teaching in a specific discipline.*

Problem solving. *In this workshop, a CIDR staff member will provide tools for diagnosing students' ability to solve problems within specific disciplines, identify appropriate instructional strategies to assist students to solve problems, and discuss methods of evaluating the effectiveness of those strategies.*

Adapting to learning styles. *This workshop focuses on identifying and discussing frameworks for describing student learning needs or characteristics at various stages of the university program. A CIDR staff member will discuss how goals for learning are related to intellectual development and to the use of specific instructional objectives in course design in this particular discipline.*

Using small group instruction. *In this workshop, a CIDR staff member will: present the rationale for using small groups for instructional purposes, suggest various methods of using and evaluating classroom groups , and discuss information on group development and the changed roles of teacher/student during small group instruction.*

Assigning and responding to student writing. *Depending on departmental needs, workshops may include one or more of the following: ways student writing can enhance learning in the discipline; effective assignment design for different purposes; strategies to help students write better papers (sequenced assignments, multiple drafts, peer feedback groups, and the writing conference); or developing and using criteria in evaluating student papers.*

Facilitating CIDR videotapes. *A CIDR staff member will show any of the following videotapes in a group setting: "Distinguished Teachers on Teaching"; "Encounters With Teaching"; "The Role of the Graduate Teaching Assistant"; or "Demonstration of a Peer Writing Group." Following the viewing, the staff member will facilitate discussion designed to relate the issues raised in the videotape to the instructional needs and interests of the participants in the specific department.*

Using computers in instruction. *Depending on departmental needs, workshops or consultation may address any of the following: instructional issues related to the use of computers in lecture or lab settings, the design of student materials, the applicability of advanced instructional technologies (e.g. interactive videodisc) to various courses, the use of telecommunications in instructional settings, the evaluation of computer-aided learning, or the use of microcomputers to increase scholarly productivity. Occasionally, CIDR staff offer special interest workshops in areas such as CAI design or Expert Systems when sufficient faculty interest warrants them.*

Instructional Materials

In addition to providing services through direct interaction with departments, CIDR also produces materials for departmental GTA Training Programs. All publications are responses to departmental requests for assistance on a particular issue. Examples of materials recently published at CIDR include:

Mentor: A Handbook for New Teaching Assistants. *This handbook serves as a general supplement to department GTA orientation. It provides up-to-date information on University GTA policies and procedures, instructional support services and campus contacts. Mentor answers GTA questions on effective lecturing, discussion and lab supervision techniques, course planning, evaluation and grading, as well as questions unique to new instructors ("What IS my status? "Am I the student's 'pal'? Who evaluates ME?"). In addition, Mentor identifies where to get help with instructional skills.*

Manage Your Student Ratings (TA Edition) & Now Make the Most of Your Student Ratings. *These two pamphlets are designed to help GTAs plan for, interpret and then follow up on their student ratings, as well as trust them. Manage Your Student Ratings addresses student ratings concerns particular to GTAs, then suggests how GTAs can plan for ratings from the time they begin planning syllabi. Suggestions include pre-evaluation, and frequent use of feedback from open-ended questions. Now Make the Most of Your Student Ratings discusses the validity and reliability of student ratings, then offers methods for instructors to interpret their ratings printouts and analyze responses to their open-ended questions. It then suggests translations of these numeric and verbal data into needs/opportunities for changes in instructional strategies. In addition, it cites resources and resource persons that can assist with follow-up on the ratings.*

Reference Manual for Teaching Assistants in Life Science Laboratories. *This manual offers suggestions on how to handle various teaching situations that are common to life science laboratories and provides a framework for use in many different life science lab applications. The topics include the responsibilities of a laboratory TA, the educational objectives for life science laboratories, interacting with students and colleagues, preparing for and running a laboratory session, evaluating the performance of students and instructor, maintaining laboratory safety, working with biological material, caring for equipment, and designing laboratory exercises.*

Using Video to Enhance Instruction. *This is a resource booklet designed to help instructors use videotape and videodisc technology as an aid to their classroom or tutorial teaching. The purposes of the booklet are threefold: 1) to identify the instructional goals video can help students achieve; 2) to describe specific procedures for using video; and 3) to identify campus resources available to instructors who use video to enhance their teaching. Teaching Assistants and TA trainers can use the booklet in a number of ways. The booklet, particularly the discussion of instructional goals and the examples of current uses of video, can be the basis of a structured discussion among instructors about the potential for using video in their teaching. The examples can also serve as models for particular instructors who may wish to adapt others' video procedures to their own needs. Finally, the booklet can serve as an indication of the resources available should particular instructors or groups of instructors wish to explore further the potential for integrating video as a teaching tool within their courses.*

"The Role of the Graduate Teaching Assistant" (A Videotape about TA Responsibilities). *"The Role of the Graduate Teaching Assistant" identifies and explores five of the many responsibilities of graduate students in their roles as Teaching Assistants at the University of Washington. TAs demonstrate effective performance of each of the responsibilities in a specific content area and discuss how they prepare for lecturing, leading discussions, directing labs, grading, and tutoring.*

"Encounters with Teaching" (A Videotape about Managing TA-Student Encounters). *"Encounters With Teaching" presents examples of thirteen teacher-student interactions which both beginning and experienced instructors often find difficult to manage. Each teaching encounter is role-played sufficiently to establish the situation to which the instructor must respond. The narrator then asks the viewers a series of questions designed to probe the issues raised within the encounter. The tape is designed to encourage discussion which enables participants to develop a variety of appropriate responses to students. The format allows the user to select and respond to any number of episodes.*

Teaching Incidents Portrayed:

Last quarter's grade
Office hours
A paper you've read before
Language problems
Speech topics
Minority issues
Resistance to assignments
Student critiques
Appropriate materials
Class discussion
Relations with students
Make-up grades
Group grades

The Center also maintains bibliographies for GTAs who are interested in reading more about teaching effectiveness of GTAs. (See example Appendix A.)

CIDR Videotape Facilities and Services

An important part of the Center's contribution to GTA training programs are our videotaping services. CIDR maintains a teaching lab that can be used by GTAs for instructional development. The teaching lab consists of a classroom with two wall-

mounted color cameras and a monitor. Behind the classroom, in a separate room, is the remote facility with a video switching board and remote controls. The camera operator sits here and electronically moves the two cameras and adjusts the sound for an optimum recording. A special effects generator located on the switching board allows for the simultaneous recording of instructor presentation on one half-screen and student responses on the other half. This facility makes it possible for Center staff to help GTAs analyze their instruction and increase their effectiveness in a variety of ways:

> **Videotape of Instructor and Class with Consultation.** *This service consists of videotaping a TA in either the CIDR teaching lab or the regular classroom followed by a consultation with a trained CIDR staff member. The consultation includes identification of an instructor's strengths and areas for improvement, as well as strategies for change.*
>
> **Video Coaching (Simultaneous Feedback).** *This service consists of the use of a small* transistorized earplug which makes possible coaching by a trained CIDR staff member as the TA is actually teaching. This process is very useful for learning how to conduct discussions in quiz sections, labs, or one-to-one tutorials. Because of the special wiring necessary for this method of instructional development, the CIDR teaching lab is the only location where simultaneous feedback is offered.
>
> **Microteaching.** *This service consists of a teach-reteach process using videotape to record an initial mini-teaching lesson, followed by a critique of the initial attempt and re-teaching of the mini-lesson incorporating the suggested improvements. Microteaching can be done in either a one-to-one setting or a group workshop setting. TA Representatives and Coordinators can be trained to facilitate the process, or CIDR will provide trained staff. Although microteaching can be done in individual departments, many instructors elect to hold microteaching sessions in the teaching lab because of the recording versatility and ease with which tapes can be made.*

TA Training Follow-up

All services provided to GTA Trainers are followed up using a systematic call-back system. CIDR staff have client lists including GTA Trainers which they contact on a regular basis. This follow-up is focused on enabling departments to provide ongoing GTA Training Programs throughout the academic year. Center staff currently are making a concerted effort to encourage departments to offer proseminars, which are quarter-length professional seminars focused on the teaching of a specific discipline at the college/university level. Graduate student credit may be provided for such courses.

Consultation Services

In addition to working with Faculty GTA Coordinators and GTA Representatives, CIDR staff also interact with individual GTAs. In fact, CIDR staff spend a great deal of time in consultation with GTAs. When GTAs call the Center for assistance, they are

commonly referred to a consultant who specializes in the particular area of interest. For example, a GTA may be concerned about his or her approach to lecturing or discussion or may want help interpreting a set of student ratings. Another GTA may be interested in ways of obtaining student feedback or working to improve teaching effectiveness. In these instances, the Center staff uses consultation to help the GTA identify particular instructional needs in the context of the specific discipline and choose an appropriate form of assistance. Instructional assistance is available to GTAs in a variety of areas, including many of those offered in a workshop setting:

- *course planning and development*
- *teaching strategies*
- *large class instruction*
- *instructional uses of new technologies*
- *classroom presentation skills*
- *student-teacher interactions*
- *student learning styles*
- *student writing*
- *methods of evaluating teaching*
- *test construction and evaluation*
- *instructional resources and materials*
- *instructional research*

In some of these cases, the GTA may simply need to be referred to other print or media resources. In other cases, the GTA may choose further interaction with the consultant in the form of videotape critique or assistance in designing or evaluating writing assignments. CIDR consultations over more effective ways of using writing as a teaching tool in a course, for example, might focus on designing effective writing assignments in keeping with objectives in a specific course or working with revisions and multiple drafts.

Frequently, consultation with individual GTAs arises from requests for assistance in obtaining midterm feedback from students. Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID) is a method of course evaluation designed to help instructors obtain such feedback. The method, commonly conducted at midterm, uses class interviews with students to provide suggestions to strengthen the course, increase communication between the students and the teacher, and improve instruction. The process not only assists the GTA in identifying problem areas, but also generates alternatives for change which the TA might adopt.

Individual consultation services provided to GTAs who want assistance with designing/evaluating writing or conducting midterm evaluations are confidential and free for University of Washington GTAs. Such consulting appointments are welcomed on a one-time only or a continuing basis.

International Teaching Assistant Project

Because International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) at the University of Washington play an important role in undergraduate education and have specific needs, Center staff designed a special project addressing the needs of ITAs. This project is committed to meeting the instructional needs of both the individual ITAs and the departments in which they teach. The ITA Project consists of four interdependent parts. Before fall quarter, new ITAs participate in a week-long workshop. During the academic year, participants attend weekly, quarter-long seminars and weekly tutorials where individual consultation allows for focus on linguistic, presentation, and interpersonal aspects of teaching. Finally, those ITAs who interact directly with undergraduate students are involved in a consulting and feedback consultations with Center staff.

CIDR Research

Throughout their efforts to assist departments and individual GTAs, CIDR staff maintain an active role in instructional research. Using a variety of educational research methods, CIDR staff work side by side with course supervisors and/or Graduate Teaching Assistants to solve instructional problems occurring within a course or across courses in a department. An example of such research would be the application of the SGID process across all sections of a multi-section course to gather data for the improvement of a specific course taught by a variety of Graduate Teaching Assistants.

Sometimes, CIDR staff are asked to conduct a study of the effectiveness of a particular course format in terms of its lecture/lab components. Or the request may be for the evaluation of course materials, activities, assignments, and/or tests. Using a variety of assessment tools, including instructor and student interviews, classroom observations, surveys, analysis of class documents, etc., CIDR staff provide a descriptive account of the

class from the perspective of all participants and the CIDR staff member as an outside observer.

In addition, CIDR staff conduct ongoing research projects to respond to theoretical or practical needs for research on topics related to instructional issues at the University of Washington. Selected projects currently underway include:

GTA Instructional Interests Assessment. The GTA Instructional Interests Assessment Project surveyed the needs and interests of graduate teaching assistants across the campus. The Center collected data on GTA perceptions concerning: 1) the instructional skills required for GTAs to teach effectively in specific disciplines, 2) available resources, 3) the level of faculty supervision, and 4) their instructional interests. In addition, the survey includes an assessment of concerns or difficulties which GTAs encounter at the University of Washington. The survey also provides demographic information for GTA training planning including GTA preparation for teaching prior to UW appointment, previous teaching experience, and variety of courses taught by GTAs.

Large Class Study. The large class study explores student and faculty perceptions of large classes at the University of Washington. Using questionnaires administered to students in large classes and qualitative methods of interview and observation, the CIDR researchers compiled data from students enrolled in large classes, faculty who teach large classes and GTAs who assist in large classes. Results of the study will increase understanding of students, faculty and teaching assistants engaged in teaching and learning in large classes at the University of Washington. Since large classes commonly involve GTAs who assist with quiz sections, evaluation, curriculum design, and management, the insights provided in this study will be useful for all GTAs who anticipate assignments related to large classes at the University.

CIDR Exit Survey Study. The general goal of the Exit Survey Study was to provide assistance to departments interested in collecting systematic evaluative and diagnostic feedback about the instructional experiences of their graduating students. This study assumes that exit or graduate survey data serve as a component of departmental program and instructional development. Departments that use graduate GTAs to provide instruction to undergraduate students can use exit surveys to gather feedback about the training and instructional experiences of GTAs. This data can then be used to inform the development of departmental GTA training programs.

Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness. The Center for Instructional Development and Research has been conducting an in-depth investigation of two evaluation procedures used for assessing teaching effectiveness on campus. This study is based on an earlier pilot study (Wulff, Staton-Spicer, Hess & Nyquist, 1985) that concluded students prefer some form of midterm rather than end-of-the-quarter evaluation of teaching effectiveness. The present study explores student satisfaction with methods of evaluating teaching effectiveness based on whether evaluation is: 1) conducted at midterm or end-of-the-quarter, 2) based on data collected through standardized forms or qualitative statements generated from student discussions in small groups, 3) combined with specific feedback to the class from the instructor.

International Teaching Assistant Survey. CIDR is currently analyzing data from two surveys conducted with the International TA (ITA) population at the University of Washington. The goals of the survey are to provide: 1) a demographic profile of the ITA population, and 2) an analysis of ITA instructional concerns. These data also identify how ITAs attempt to explore campus resources--both individuals and instructional materials--to resolve their concerns and cope with instructional differences.

Summary

In our efforts to provide assistance for GTA training programs, we at CIDR provide services and address concerns at a variety of levels. In the organization and planning of

departmental GTA training programs, we work with departmental chairpersons, Faculty GTA Training Coordinators and Student GTA training representatives. Additionally, we work with Graduate Teaching Assistants who individually come to the Center for assistance or are referred by their home departments. In some cases we address a particular set of GTA instructional needs as represented in the ITA Project. Whatever the need, we work to provide services, publish materials, conduct research, and consult with GTAs in order to enable them to be effective instructors while they are at the University of Washington and to prepare those for whom college instruction will be a career.

Our approach allows us to provide extensive GTA training on our campus. It enables us to encourage departments to be responsible for their own TA training based on a strong discipline orientation, and it allows TAs to work with potential mentors within their own departments. Additionally, it increases the small CIDR staff by 160; two members from each of the 80 departments employing Graduate Teaching Assistants are involved in planning and executing TA training programs. It is clearly a cost effective effort.

The approach has its limitations, of course, since it depends on the level of the department's commitment to the training of their Graduate Teaching Assistants. A few of our departments provide GTA training programs which consist of one half day of GTA/faculty discussions about particular courses. That, we believe, is not sufficient training. Many other departments, however, provide GTA training programs lasting from three days to two weeks in the Autumn, followed by classroom visits from the course supervisors, weekly meetings, and ongoing workshops throughout the academic year. Some departments offer extensive orientation in the Autumn, weekly GTA training meetings, quarterly classroom observation by course supervisors and/or CIDR staff, required class interviews and/or videotape critiques, and well-developed professional seminars focused on the teaching of a particular discipline in the college/university setting.

Graduate Teaching Assistant Training continues to be a challenge for those of us in the Center for Instructional Development and Research. Effective Graduate Teaching Assistant training is a key element in our effort to try to assist departments in improving undergraduate education at the University of Washington.

Notes

[1] Beckmann, George, (May 20, 1980). Correspondence to Department Chairs. Seattle, WA: Office of the Provost.

[2] Beckmann, George, (April 17, 1980). Mandate to TA Training Task Force. Seattle, WA: Office of the Provost.

[3] "Peer Institutions" as adopted by the Washington State Legislature include University of Arizona, University of California - Berkeley, University of California - Los Angeles, University of Iowa, University of Michigan, University of Illinois - Champaign, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill, University of Oregon (includes Health Sciences in Portland).

[4] For a more complete description of the Center's philosophy and operations, see: Nyquist, Jody D., (1986). CIDR: A Small Service Firm Within a Research University: *To Improve the Academy*, 66-83.

APPENDIX A

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF TA TRAINING READINGS

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Figure 1
University of Washington
"Train-the-Trainer" Model
for
Graduate Teaching Assistant Training